

"Three and a half years after Katrina, the people of St. Bernard Parish are still working to clean up the storm's mess. That shouldn't be," said Rep. Melancon. "Today's announcement that FEMA will help the parish remove debris from Blomquist Canal is evidence that a new spirit of cooperation has taken hold at the agency. Secretary Napolitano is serious about working with state and local officials to remove obstacles still holding up recovery projects, and I applaud her commitment to getting the job done quickly and effectively."

In announcing the funding for Blomquist Canal, Secretary Napolitano said, "We are going to help St. Bernard Parish finish their canal cleanup work. Parish President Taffaro identified canal debris removal as one of his top-10 recovery projects, and our close working relationship with the parish and the state has helped make this coordinated effort a success."

Hurricane Katrina clogged canals across Louisiana with debris and sediment, and some, including Blomquist Canal, remain obstructed with a variety of household, yard and automotive items, and in some cases live, growing trees.

Last week, Rep. Melancon joined Secretary Napolitano and U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan during their first working trip to the Gulf Coast to assess the region's hurricane recovery progress. During the visit, Secretary Napolitano announced FEMA would provide \$12 million in additional funding to help repair the St. Bernard Parish Water Treatment Plant, a project Rep. Melancon and parish officials had long been advocating for. Secretary Donovan announced HUD's acceptance of the state of Louisiana's \$438 million plan to support long-term disaster recovery following Hurricanes Gustav and Ike last year. Louisiana's recovery strategy seeks to produce affordable rental housing, help commercial and agricultural businesses, and support coastal restoration. The state will provide more than 70 percent of this funding to local parishes to support these efforts.

Yesterday, Secretary Napolitano moved toward better coordination between DHS and the state of Louisiana with the creation of the Unified Public Assistance Project Decision Team, designed to expedite decision-making for disputed projects between FEMA and the state.

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